

The
Melville Society
N E W S L E T T E R

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The annual meeting of the Society will be held on Wednesday afternoon, December 30, at four o'clock in Private Dining Room 5 of the Palmer House, Chicago. An informal meeting is planned, with plenty of opportunity for talk and fellowship. In spite of the fact that a dining room has been reserved, no meal will be served, though arrangements can be made for serving cocktails if a sufficient number desire them. Dining Room 5 simply was the most suitable room available in the Palmer House for a group of between twenty and thirty people.

President Merton Sealts has arranged a program which will give some academic significance to the occasion. There will be ten or fifteen minutes for a business meeting, consisting largely of the secretary's report and the election of a new member of the executive committee. Two brief papers will then be presented. Carvel Collins will read a paper on Melville's use of Polynesian names in *Mardi*, and Laurence N. Barrett will discuss Melville's poetry. The papers will be followed by general discussion, with some comments by William Bysshe Stein (Melville's poetic technique) and Richard Stavig (the poetry and *Billy Budd*). Any remaining time can be spent in further discussion, argument, and getting acquainted with one another.

At this writing, it seems very doubtful if President Sealts will be able to attend the meeting. His place as presiding officer will be taken, in case of his absence, by another member of the executive committee. Unfortunately, the secretary must also report the impossibility—barring unforeseen developments—of his own attendance. It is with deep regret that he finds he must remain in Colorado during the holidays. He doubly regrets the necessity of missing the chance to meet several new members of the Society who are planning to be present, as well as the pleasure of renewing his acquaintance with older members.

One question which might very well be considered at our business session is that of annual dues. The present fee of two dollars for active membership strikes a number of persons as too high. It

would be possible to publish the Newsletter and mail it quarterly if the dues were reduced to one dollar, but it would not be possible at that price to include any other services. Such items as the annual Melville bibliography, reprints or offprints of articles, and special publications of various kinds can be issued from time to time if the dues remain at two dollars. It is a question, therefore, of deciding whether to retain the present fee and use our surplus for these special services or to lower the fee and send out nothing but the Newsletter. Incidentally, our treasury at the moment seems to be nicely in the black.

ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Earlier this year the Society was privileged to distribute to its members, largely through the generosity of the Providence (R.I.) Public Library, the *Annual Melville Bibliography for 1951*, compiled by Stuart C. Sherman, John H. Birss, and Gordon Roper. It was hoped that this might become a yearly service for our members.

Mr. Sherman reports that the bibliography for 1952 has been unavoidably delayed. Work on it is expected to be resumed in February or March, and it may be that the 1952 and 1953 bibliographies will appear simultaneously about the middle of next year. In any case, efforts will be made to see that the bibliography is continued and that all members receive copies as they are issued.

ABSTRACTS OF DISSERTATION

The secretary has recently completed the compilation of *Doctoral Dissertations on Herman Melville: A Chronological Summary (1933-1952)*. This includes abstracts or bibliographical references for all doctoral dissertations dealing with Melville which have been accepted by American universities through the year 1952, with one entry for 1953 and a list of studies in progress.

This pamphlet is now being reproduced by the multilith process, and copies

will be available within the month. A question arises: Shall the Society subsidize this publication from its budget in 1954 (approximately \$25), or shall copies be offered at 25 cents each to those who desire them and are willing to pay for them? The work runs to 40 pages and describes forty-two completed studies on Melville.

If the matter is not brought up for consideration at the Chicago meeting, it will be referred to the executive committee. Some idea of the number of persons interested in obtaining the pamphlet would be extremely helpful.

NOTES

The *Moby-Dick Centennial Essays*, edited for the Melville Society with an introduction by Tyrus Hillway and Luther S. Mansfield, was published by the Southern Methodist University Press on November 30. \$3.75.

The Eye Gate House, Inc. (of 2716 Forty-First Avenue, Long Island City 1, N.Y.) sells a version of *Moby-Dick* in filmstrips designed for use with high school classes in literature. It is offered for seven dollars and is part of a series of literary classics.

Belated report: *Symbolism and American Literature*, by Charles Feidelson, Jr., was published by the University of Chicago Press on February 13. It contains much material of interest to Melville scholars. \$6.50.

A radio dramatization of *Moby-Dick* was presented by the National Broadcasting Company on the NBC Star Playhouse on Sunday evening, November 8. Frederic March played Ahab. After the performance, Mr. March was asked whether he thought *Moby-Dick* might ever be given successfully on Broadway. "Who," replied Mr. March, "would play Moby Dick?"

The secretary has recently been in correspondence with John Huston, the motion picture director and producer, with regard to plans for the projected new

motion picture of *Moby-Dick*. A photograph of the *Charles W. Morgan*, the only old-time whaling ship still preserved, was among the items sent to Mr. Huston.

According to a recent report, the entire January (1954) issue of the *American Literature* magazine will be devoted to Melville.

Work is progressing on a survey of scholarship in American literature, with a chapter on each major author, now being prepared by a committee of the American Literature Group.

The next volume to be published by Hendricks House in the complete edition of Melville's works will be *The Confidence-Man*, which was in galley proof during October. Following that, presumably, will come *Clarel*.

A collection of Melville's letters, now being gathered for the Yale University Press by William H. Gilman and Merrell R. Davis, probably will be published in 1954.

"Our Berkshire Heritage" was the theme of a ball given by the Junior League of Pittsfield (Mass.) on Friday evening, November 27, and illustrations of Melville's *Moby-Dick* formed the chief subject of the decorations. Nine large water-color paintings were used to depict scenes from the works of Melville, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Holmes, Bryant, and Catherine Sedgwick—all Berkshire authors. The walls were also decorated with scrolls on which were quotations from the works of the same authors. Miniature replicas of the *Pequod* were placed on each table in the dining room (of the Hotel Sheraton), and an ice brick carved in the shape of the *Pequod* formed the centerpiece of the buffet table. Anchors and ship's lanterns also were used in the scheme of decorations. For this interesting information we are indebted to a newspaper clipping kindly sent by Robert G. Newman of the Berkshire Athenaeum.

For Christmas: "Come; let us squeeze hands all round . . ."

THE *Melville Society* NEWSLETTER

IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE Melville Society, a group of literary scholars and others interested in the life and works of Herman Melville. The Society seeks to facilitate the exchange of information among its members, to stimulate the study of Melville's life and works, and to encourage literary, historical, and bibliographical research. Executive committee: Merton M. Sealts (1954), president; Eleanor Melville Metcalf (1953); William H. Gilman (1955); Walter E. Bezanson (1956); Harrison Hayford (1957). Membership is two dollars per year and includes all services of the Society. Associate membership (non-voting) is one dollar per year and includes all issues of the Newsletter. Address Tyrus Hillway, secretary, at Colorado State College, Greeley, Colorado.